

MINUTES OF BENTON COUNTY QUORUM COURT

April 26, 2007

A regular meeting of the Benton County Quorum Court was held on Thursday, April 26, 2007 at 5:00 p.m. at the Benton County Administration Building, 215 East Central Avenue, Bentonville, Arkansas, pursuant to proper call and notice.

County Judge Gary Black called the meeting to order.

Deputy Clerk Betsy Deaton called roll as follows:

12 JP's Present:	Brown, Glass, Harrison, Hill, Hobbs, Moore, Schindler, Stephenson, Summers, Winscott, Wolf, Wozniak
1 Absent:	Hubbard

The presiding officer led the pledge of allegiance to the flag. JP Tim Summers led the prayer.

A moment of silence was held in support of the men and women in the United States Armed Forces.

MINUTES:

JP Stephenson made motion to approve the Minutes of the regular meeting of March 22, 2007 as distributed, seconded by JP Harrison. Motion to approve the minutes carried by unanimous voice vote.

COUNTY JUDGE'S REPORT:

County Judge Gary Black commended JP Debra Hobbs for being the only Justice of the Peace who assisted with the County Wide Clean Up on April 14, 2007.

County Judge Gary Black also announced that: (1) a "Company Picnic" will be held on May 18, 2007 at 11:00 a.m. in Dave Peel Park, and asked all the JPs to participate; (2) he has received 19 applications for the Planning Board position; (3) the County Auction will be held at the County Road Department on June 9, 2007 in conjunction with the cities of Bentonville, Rogers, and Bella Vista; (4) Benton County has received an award from the Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department for excellence on a State road project in "Y" City, and Superintendent Steve Douglas recently traveled to Alma to receive the award; (5) the State Revenue Office will be opening a branch office at the county's new Poplar Street Office in Rogers on May 14, 2007; (6) Annual Prayer Breakfasts will be held in Rogers and Bentonville on May 3, 2007; and (7) a meeting will be held on May 3, 2007 at 8:00 a.m. in the Quorum Court room to discuss a program to take back outdated and unused pharmaceuticals.

County Judge Gary Black stated that the D.O.C.C. program is going well, and explained that the Circuit Judges are sentencing some offenders to report to the County Judge who then assigns them to work at various places including the Road Department, Horses for Healing, and the Recycling Center. He said they are starting a Saturday work day for offenders who are supposed to serve weekends only, because that is usually when the Jail is the most crowded, and it has been so successful that they are going to start a second crew to work on trash pick up.

ELECTED OFFICIALS REPORT:

Assessor Bill Moutray stated that the State Revenue Office will be opening a new office in Rogers on May 15, 2007 and that will hopefully relieve some of the congestion in the Olive Branch location.

Bill Moutray stated that it would have been nice to be informed before he read in the newspaper that he is going to be displaced from the Administration Building. He said that no one from the Quorum Court has talked to him about the duties of his office. He said that so far this year they have picked up 4,063 brand new homes, including several that are over 3,000 square feet and one that is 16,000 square feet. He said that Benton County now has 144,943 parcels. He distributed a handout of his concerns regarding moving the Assessor's Office out of the Administration Building. He stated that they have to do 6,420 parcels per month on the reappraisal that is mandated by the State of Arkansas, and that does not count new construction. He said that deed transactions have to be recorded on the Property Cards within 20 days of the transaction, and that one half of Benton County has to have new values in the county system by April 14, 2008. He said that notices for all 144,943 parcels have to be ready to mail to property owners by July 1, 2008. He said that if any of these things fail to occur, they will be found out of compliance by the Assessment Coordination Department and they will lose all funding to the reappraisal fund. He said the A.C.D. will come in and take over the Assessor's Office and do the reappraisal at an unknown cost to Benton County.

Bill Moutray stated that it will be costly to move all of the fiber optics for their computer systems and phone lines, and they cannot afford any downtime in the office because it would certainly put them out of compliance. He said that Benton County has trained its taxpayers for 12 years to come to the Administration Building to assess and pay their taxes, and he would like to keep that continuity instead of sending them two blocks down the road to an office with no parking. He asked why they are considering the expense of locating two offices when they only need to locate an office for a courtroom. He concluded by saying that it is not a good idea to be bringing inmates into the building to mix with the public who are here to do business on a daily basis.

County Judge Gary Black stated that he is appointing an Ad Hoc Committee to look into the Juvenile Detention Center issue. He said it will be chaired by JP Stephenson, and Justices Wolf, Hobbs, and Moore have agreed to serve on the committee.

County Judge Gary Black gave a report on the amount of materials collected at the County Wide Clean Up on April 14th, and stated that they were surprised at the turnout considering the poor weather conditions. He said 1,100 loads were brought in, and they would like to thank the City of Bentonville for providing about 10 people who came out and helped. He said if they have enough money they would like to have another Clean Up Day in the Fall.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

JP Moore stated that the Long Range Planning/Properties and Equipment Committee met on Tuesday, April 24, and discussed the tour of various properties in the downtown area that was held in early April. He said the recommendation at that time was to do a study on the feasibility of putting a courtroom space in the first floor of the Administration Building and relocating the Assessor to 110 Central, but that nothing has been written in stone yet.

Assessor Bill Moutray stated that he did the appraisal on the building at 110 Central, and it did not appraise anywhere near \$1.5 million.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Don Day commented on recent statements made by the Benton County Planning Director concerning the authority of the Planning Board. He said she is trying to convince the Planning Board to develop some sort of regulation for the Beaver Lake watershed area, and they were told some time ago that land use regulations were a dead issue in Benton County. He said that the idea of a task force has been raised again, only this time it is headed by the Northwest Arkansas Council, which plans to lead a regional effort to preserve the lake, and that makes sense since Madison and Washington Counties control a larger percentage of the watershed than Benton County. He said that the Council is a private, non-profit group made up of civic and business leaders, and they will be hiring a national watershed consultant to bring together various stakeholders and identify ways to maintain the lake. He said this method has worked well with the Illinois River watershed, and the first task will be to catalog the current applicable regulations to determine if any additional regulations are needed, because it may just be a matter of better enforcement. He said they believe this approach makes better sense than just passing feel-good ordinances without considering all of the consequences. He suggested that the Planning Board and the Planning Department make better use of their time while waiting to see what the Northwest Arkansas Council's national consultant suggests.

OLD BUSINESS:

None

NEW BUSINESS:

- (A) Proposed Resolution Authorizing Application and Acceptance of Funds Granted Through the Arkansas Department of Finance and Administration, Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) for the Juvenile Probation Department, and to Include Such Grant Funds as Revenues and expenditures in the 2007 Benton County Budget; Sponsor: JP Tim Summers

Deputy Clerk Betsy Deaton read the proposed Resolution in full. JP Summers made motion for approval, seconded by JP Wolf. JP Winscott asked if this grant will result in the addition of any staff. Grants Administrator Kathy Bannister stated that it will not.

There being no further discussion, a roll call vote was recorded as follows:

12 yeas: Brown, Glass, Harrison, Hill, Hobbs, Moore, Schindler,
Stephenson, Summers, Winscott, Wolf, Wozniak
1 absent: Hubbard

Resolution duly adopted and assigned No. **R-2007-05**.

OTHER BUSINESS:

None

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

JP Summers announced that the Finance Committee will meet Tuesday, May 1, 2007 at 2:30 p.m., and the Committee of Thirteen will meet Tuesday, May 8, 2007 at 5:00 p.m. He added that he would like to apologize to Assessor Bill Moutray because he was under the impression that Mr. Moutray had been made aware of the discussion concerning moving his office prior to the Long Range Planning/Properties and Equipment meeting. He said that he certainly had the right to know what is being considered for the Assessor's office.

County Clerk Mary Lou Slinkard stated that the Rogers office is coming along nicely, and that after 23 years of service, her son Jason is retiring from the United States Navy. She said the ceremony will take place Saturday, April 28, 2007 at 4:00 p.m. at the Econo Lodge in Bentonville, and all are invited to attend.

There being no further business to come before the court, upon motion and second the meeting was adjourned at 5:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary L. Slinkard,
County Clerk

Prepared by: Betsy Deaton